

Appendix J: Communications Plan



**BIRMINGHAM
CYCLE REVOLUTION**



Birmingham City Council

Communications Plan

Building on experiences from a range of other relevant projects, this outline marketing and engagement strategy has been developed for the project up to March 2016.

It includes strategic engagement and promotion with partners and stakeholders and the wider public via a range of media channels and fora. The strategy also includes more targeted local engagement on specific scheme elements, including public consultation, as part of the scheme development process.

It is intended to be a live document to manage an evolutionary process and will be constantly updated as the project progresses, including for the 2023 and 2033 time horizons in due course.

Strategic Approach

Communications, promotion and marketing are critical elements in the delivery of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution. As one of the main barriers to cycling is often a lack of information or awareness, it is crucial that the right messages reach the right people at the right time. This will ensure that everyone who visits, works or lives in Birmingham is aware of the significant level of investment taking place and the ways in which the improved infrastructure offer will substantially enhance the opportunities for walking and cycling. The use of a carefully considered Communications Plan will also help to ensure maximum impact from the resources invested.

We will adopt a dual approach to communications as follows:

Approach	Objectives	Target Audience
High level strategic communications	<p>To inform the audience about: the successful grant application; the forward programme; the phasing of infrastructure delivery; and the delivery of supporting measures.</p> <p>To further develop the 'buzz' around cycling that exists in the city.</p>	<p>Internal stakeholders – Members and relevant directorates.</p> <p>External stakeholders and businesses.</p> <p>Members of the delivery teams of complementary schemes, such as LSTF and Bike North Birmingham.</p> <p>Project partners, including Centro, the Canal and River Trust, CTC, Sustrans and Push Bikes.</p> <p>Members of the public.</p>
Targeted informative messages	<p>To consult and seek inputs on specific scheme proposals and local impacts.</p>	<p>External stakeholders and businesses.</p> <p>Project partners, including</p>



	<p>To inform specific groups about individual scheme elements: for example, to inform local communities about new/improved infrastructure provision in their local area.</p> <p>To work effectively with project partners in the design and delivery process.</p>	<p>Centro, the Canal and River Trust, CTC, Sustrans and Push Bikes.</p> <p>Targeted local communities and associated community groups.</p> <p>Local residents and frontagers.</p>
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Of critical importance is the continued support and ‘buy-in’ of key stakeholders at project implementation, a process which has already begun as part of the development of the grant application. Therefore the communications activities that take place early on in the implementation stage will focus on the delivery of high level strategic messages to key stakeholders. This will seek to take particular advantage of local media partners, including specifically the Birmingham Mail newspaper linked to their Cycle City campaign in support of the bid.

As the project progresses, stakeholders and project partners will be continually engaged through the use of specific messages that will cement their ongoing support beyond the life of the period of infrastructure delivery. For example, as part of the Bike North Birmingham project, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have been continually engaged in the project and all PCSOs in Sutton Coldfield are now trained Ride Leaders and can continue to lead rides beyond the life of the project as part of an on-going legacy. Members of the wider public will also be communicated with at the outset of the implementation stage at a general level, followed by more targeted messages associated with the delivery of specific schemes in each local area.

The communications plan will coordinate, support and dovetail with any marketing and promotions activities developed as part of the supporting measures programmes, all under the Birmingham Cycle Revolution banner. These are not covered in this outline plan at this stage.

Target Audiences

Our Communications Plan has been developed based on lessons learnt from ongoing travel and transport marketing, drawing in particular upon expertise from the Bike North Birmingham project, which encompasses a wide-ranging programme of communications, marketing and promotional activities. Bike North Birmingham has given valuable insight into the most effective and best value methods of communication, particularly in terms of the communications channels that are most effective for particular target groups. Within the dual approach to communications that we have developed, we have therefore set out the different activities that will be undertaken to reach the following groups:

- Internal stakeholders – elected Members, representatives from relevant directorates and delivery teams involved in complementary projects;



- External stakeholders – ranging from project delivery partners such as the Canal and River Trust and CTC to those with a lesser degree of influence but who will still have an interest in the project, such as the Highways Agency and local businesses; and
- Members of the public – both as a group as a whole and also specific communities which will be affected by infrastructure delivery in their local area.

Objectives

Our objectives in terms of communication, marketing and promotion are as follows:

- To inform internal and external stakeholders and the wider public about the successful grant application;
- To promote the Birmingham Cycle Revolution project and associated infrastructure improvements to all those who work and live in Birmingham as well as those who visit; building on and seeking to increase the awareness and recognition of the brand identity that has been developed;
- To coordinate with existing and emergent programmes of supporting activity and smarter choices and to coordinate opportunities for joint working across different project strands and other initiatives as appropriate;
- To ensure consistency in communications across the individual project elements and schemes; and
- To coordinate stakeholder involvement, engagement and networking across the project.

Key Messages

The key message that we will convey to each target audience is around the city's commitment to a 20 year plan to support cyclists across the city. The Birmingham Cycle Revolution will deliver the step-change in provision required to see real increases in levels of cycling, building on key cycling projects such as Bike North Birmingham and the West Midlands LSTF Smarter Network, Smarter Choices project.

Working with partners across the city, the ambitious plan aims to make cycling an integral part of the transport network with cycling part of everyday life and mass participation a reality. We want to improve cycling routes, making the city a safe and attractive environment for cycling and walking and delivering an inclusive network for all users. This transformational agenda will play a key role in taking forward Birmingham as an economically thriving city with sustainable active travel at its heart.

The application to the Cycle City Ambition Grant fund forms the first stage in the Birmingham Cycle Revolution. It focuses on investment in cycling infrastructure and facilities, building on the existing cycle network, making the best use of the canal network and green corridors and developing a comprehensive on-road network offering significantly improved cycling



conditions. People will be able to leave their bike safely as they go to work or meet friends, either in the city or in our suburban centres. New cyclists will find it easier to find information on how to start cycling and we will work with partners in our business sector to ensure that the Birmingham Cycle Revolution supports our city's continued economic growth.

Outline Communications Strategy

Our outline communications strategy is set out in the table below. The strategy will be a live document under constant review that will seek to respond to change as the project progresses, and be responsive to new opportunities as they arise, particularly as supporting initiatives and smarter choices campaigns are scoped in more detail.

The initial focus would be on celebrating a successful bid and capitalising on any associated publicity. This will be coupled with informative messages to those that will have a relatively strong interest in the project and those who will be involved in project delivery. As the project progresses, local communities will be consulted and communicated with in line with the phasing of infrastructure delivery. Once infrastructure comes on line, there will be more specific focus on promoting the opportunities for cycling with wider members of the public in line with the Smarter Choices activities that will be delivered.

There is already a significant amount of work being undertaken in Birmingham and across the West Midlands to promote cycling, including:

- Training, events, campaigns and activities carried out as part of the Bike North Birmingham project and along ten key corridors as part of the West Midlands LSTF programme;
- Events, campaigns and activities undertaken by project partners, in particular Sustrans and CTC;
- Regular safety campaigns such as the HGV/large vehicle campaign and Be Seen Be Safe;
- Ongoing work with Workplaces / Top Cycle Locations;
- The provision of Sustrans Bike It and Bikeability training in schools;
- Annual Sky Rides and Sky Ride Local;
- Women on Wheels; and
- BeActive by Bike.

Our strategy is therefore to link in to these activities, maximising their visibility and promoting uptake in order to increase their overall effectiveness, rather than to create a brand new approach that may compete with these activities as part of a more fragmented approach.

It should be noted that the activities contained in the communications strategy are in addition to those set out under the governance arrangements i.e. the regular communications and meetings that will take place between the various groups that make up the delivery team.



Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<i>High Level Strategic Communications</i>			
Dedicated project email address Set up a dedicated project email address for sending out global emails and to use as the main point of contact for general queries/comments about the project.	Provide a main general point of contact for incoming and outgoing project communications.	Internal stakeholders External stakeholders Members of the public	Upon notification of the successful grant application. Internal email management procedures to be reviewed on a regular basis.
Finalise branding guidelines Finalise the Birmingham Cycle Revolution brand / straplines that will be used on all communications.	Develop a cohesive, consistent brand for use on all communications and ensure that all members of the delivery team are aware of how to use it.	All groups	Upon notification of the successful grant application.
Project Pages on Birmingham City Council website Development of website pages to act as a hub for project information and campaign activity. To include scheme information (including phasing plans), progress updates, contact details, educational information on cycling and information on upcoming events as a minimum.	Provide a central point of information that all groups can access to find out information about the project and how they can get involved.	All groups	Upon notification of the successful grant application.

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Email notification of the successful grant application Email to inform internal and external stakeholders that the grant application has been successful, accompanied by a short project brochure that sets out what will be delivered over the two year programme and what the immediate next steps are.</p>	<p>Notify stakeholders that the grant application has been successful.</p> <p>Provide headline information on what will be achieved during the project.</p>	<p>Elected Members</p> <p>Internal stakeholders</p> <p>External stakeholders</p>	<p>Upon notification of the successful grant application.</p>
<p>Briefing sessions Hold dedicated briefing sessions with elected Members to provide more detail on the project objectives, scheme details and delivery objectives.</p>	<p>Ensure all Members are aware of the project and what it aims to achieve.</p> <p>Obtain Member buy-in and support for the implementation phase of the project.</p>	<p>Elected Members</p>	<p>Upon notification of the successful grant application.</p>
<p>Cycling Map Updates Update the existing Birmingham cycle map with future routes marked alongside phasing information. Include more general information about the project and the associated supporting measures.</p>	<p>Provide existing and potential cyclists and other interested parties with more detailed information on the new routes available/that will be delivered.</p>	<p>All groups, particularly existing stakeholders</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Officer attendance at Ward Committee meetings Attendance at meetings as required to provide updates on the project and to answer any questions that may arise.</p>	To inform attendees about the project and to respond to any issues arising at a ward level.	Local councillors External stakeholders, such as local community groups	As required for the project duration. Upon request.
<p>Email updates Regular progress updates/newsletters sent via email to the following: -Elected Members -Representatives from relevant directorates -Subscribers of the Birmingham Bulletin (a monthly Council email with more than 100,000 subscribers) -Other email databases including people who have pledged support for the Birmingham Cycle Revolution during bidding.</p>	To inform internal stakeholders and members of the public about the progress being made and to highlight milestones achieved.	Elected Members Directorate representatives Members of the public	Quarterly throughout the life of the project.
<p>Bilateral meetings Meetings to be held as required to discuss project progress.</p>	To discuss project progress and agree any actions required.	Elected Members Directorate representatives External stakeholders	As required for the project duration.

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Create a self-sustaining buzz around cycling through the use of social media</p> <p>Provide project updates and information of interest initially on the Council's Twitter and Facebook pages to help create and sustain a 'buzz' around cycling. Consideration will be given thereafter to the use of dedicated Birmingham Cycle Revolution Facebook and Twitter pages.</p> <p>-Twitter: bite size information with links to the Facebook page and the project webpage, images of routes/infrastructure upgrades, launch local schemes.</p> <p>-Facebook: industry commentary, wider issues around health, wellbeing and sustainability, information on events and competitions, images of routes/infrastructure upgrades, launch local schemes.</p>	<p>To highlight key activities / launch new routes and infrastructure.</p> <p>To promote wider messages relating to cycling, including health, wellbeing and sustainability.</p> <p>To use imagery to capture attention</p>	<p>All groups, particularly those who use digital technology/social media</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Soft Launch Located in corporate environment. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A brief PowerPoint presentation/s. -Speech by key Birmingham Cycle Revolution Ambassador. -Pop-up banner stands highlighting the improvements to the cycle network. -Information leaflets. -Give away packs to attendees. 	<p>To generate publicity for the project and media interest.</p> <p>To gain the support of local businesses and other key external stakeholders.</p> <p>To identify opportunities for joint working.</p>	<p>Internal stakeholders</p> <p>External stakeholders</p> <p>Media</p> <p>Local businesses</p>	<p>Within two months following notification of the successful grant application.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Public Launch A marketing awareness campaign held at a weekend in the city centre. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advertising the event on the project pages on the Council website. -Sending email invitations to all email distribution lists. -Press release and advertisements. -Appropriate outdoor media covering each quadrant. -Information in the Birmingham Bulletin. -‘Ribbon cutting ceremony’ with Councillors. -Attendance by a local celebrity. -Updated cycling map as a giveaway. -Promotional items. -On-site Dr Bike events. -Competition – data capture to generate email contact list for future communications 	<p>To publicly celebrate a successful bid.</p> <p>To raise public awareness about the project.</p> <p>To create excitement and a ‘buzz’ about cycling.</p>	<p>Members of the public</p>	<p>Within three months following notification of the successful grant application.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Public awareness campaign A combination of outdoor advertising and press advertising will be used as part of a general public awareness campaign. Working in partnership with the Birmingham Mail newspaper's Cycle City campaign in support of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution bid. Linked to above public launch.</p>	<p>To raise awareness about the project.</p> <p>To encourage people to visit the project pages on the Council website to find out more information.</p> <p>To create excitement and a 'buzz' about cycling.</p>	<p>Members of the public</p>	<p>To launch within three months following notification of the successful grant application and to continue throughout the life of the project.</p>
<p>Press Releases Press releases targeted at a variety of local press publications.</p>	<p>Support awareness of the project and raise awareness of the infrastructure, events, activities and advice and support that will be available.</p>	<p>Members of the public</p> <p>External stakeholders</p>	<p>Initial press release upon notification of the successful grant application and at regular intervals thereafter to coincide with key events/milestone achievements.</p>
<p>Formal progress report documents Formal progress reports to be produced to highlight progress to date and the milestones achieved. To be sent to key internal and external stakeholders via email and placed on the project pages on the Council website.</p>	<p>Formal confirmation of achievements to date and provision of headline benefits information.</p>	<p>Internal stakeholders</p> <p>External stakeholders</p> <p>Project partners</p> <p>Members of the public</p> <p>DfT</p>	<p>First report to be produced at the end of the first year, with an additional report at the end of the second year.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<i>Targeted Informative Messages</i>			
<p>Formal public consultation Formal public consultation to be undertaken with local communities as part of the development of the Full Business Case for specific schemes.</p> <p>-Consultation guidelines to be developed based on Birmingham City Council best practice that will be applied as standard for each scheme element including: household letter drops to households within identified buffer zones for each scheme element; consultation exhibitions/events; and seeking to capture feedback to be used in scheme design.</p>	<p>To consult with local communities on specific scheme elements, particularly where there may be some degree of opposition e.g. in relation to changes to TROs.</p> <p>To raise awareness and local knowledge of infrastructure improvements taking place in local areas.</p> <p>To provide a formal process through which community feedback can be obtained and reflected in scheme design.</p>	<p>Members of the public</p> <p>External stakeholders such as community groups, PCSOs and local businesses/business groups.</p>	<p>During the development of the Full Business Case for each scheme element, with sufficient time given to incorporating feedback into scheme design.</p>
<p>Community specific cycle route maps Updated cycle map(s) to highlight the new routes/infrastructure improvements.</p>	<p>To provide existing and potential cyclists with information on new/extended routes in their local area.</p>	<p>Members of the public.</p>	<p>In accordance with the delivery schedule for scheme elements; maps to be available for distribution at community launch events.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Community launch events Individual launch events in local communities linked to the delivery of infrastructure improvements/the delivery of new routes. To include: -Giveaways and promotions; -Cycle maps; -Led rides using the new routes; and -Visibility of project delivery staff to respond to questions/feedback.</p>	<p>To publicise the new routes/improved infrastructure available to local communities and the benefits that these will bring.</p>	<p>Members of the public External stakeholders such as community groups, PCSOs and local businesses/business groups.</p>	<p>In accordance with the delivery schedule for scheme elements.</p>
<p>Volunteer Cycling Champions Recruitment of Cycling Champions who can raise awareness, promote cycling more widely in their communities and encourage people to give cycling a go.</p>	<p>Provide cycling champions who can demonstrate the benefits that cycling can bring, give confidence to new cyclists and provide general advice and support.</p>	<p>Members of the public, specific engagement at workplaces and schools.</p>	<p>To be available in each local area as infrastructure is delivered.</p>

Communications Activity	Objectives	Target Audience(s)	Timescale/Frequency
<p>Link to wider cycling events and campaigns Build on the considerable amount of events and campaigns that are currently taking place in and around Birmingham, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -National Bike Week activity; -Sky Ride; -School activities including Bikelt and Bikeability training; -Women on Wheels; -Be Active Cycle Hubs / Big Birmingham Bikes; -Top Cycle Location (workplaces); and -Be Safe Be Seen safety campaigns 	<p>Maximise the effectiveness of existing events and campaigns by linking them to a wider range of projects.</p> <p>Promote cycling to a wide range of audiences as part of creating a general 'buzz' around cycling.</p>	<p>Members of the public, specifically commuters, school, college and university attendees, women, community groups and those 'hard to reach' groups who traditionally do not cycle.</p>	<p>Throughout the life of the project, in accordance with events and activities taking place.</p>